

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
(Standing Committee of Berkeley County Council)

Chairman: Mr. Dennis L. Fish, District No. 5

The COMMITTEE ON FINANCE met on Monday, February 17, 2003, Berkeley County Office Building, 223 North Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, at 8:32 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. Dennis L. Fish, Council Member District No. 5, Chairman; Mr. Milton Farley, Council Member District No. 1; Mrs. Judith K. Spooner, District No. 2; Mr. William E. Crosby, Council Member District No. 3; Mr. Charles E. Davis, Council Member District No. 4; Mrs. Judy C. Mims, Council Member District No. 6; Mr. Caldwell Pinckney, Jr., Council Member District No. 7; Mr. Steve C. Davis, Councilmember District No. 8; Mr. James H. Rozier, Jr., Supervisor, ex officio; Mr. D. Mark Stokes, County Attorney; and Ms. Barbara B. Austin, Clerk of County Council.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the entrance of the County Office Building, 223 N. Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina and the Berkeley County Library, and mailed to the newspaper, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Chairman Fish called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Fish asked the Committee for approval of minutes from the Committee on Finance meeting held on January 13, 2003.

It was moved by Councilmember Crosby and seconded by Councilmember Spooner to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was passed by a unanimous voice vote of the Committee.

A. Mr. Fred Bolz, Berkeley County Special Fire Tax District Advisory Commission Acting Chairman, Re: Volunteer Fire Department Presentation.

Mr. Bolz addressed the Committee stating he was present to provide information only. In the past, rural Fire Depts. were originally funded by a levy set by each individual dept. The amount varied between \$15-\$20. In the mid 1980's Council established the first fire fee county wide of \$25-\$30. In the 1990's it was increased to \$50. This process works for the larger more affluent depts., but does not work for the smaller depts. The Commission would like to recommend a millage increase of 3.5 mills to be levied on all property (homes, businesses, industry and vacant land) in the rural areas of the County. This will not include cars and trucks. Mr. Bolz referred to a packet submitted to the Committee on January 13, 2003, that outlines efforts to bring the smaller depts. into a more equitable means of support. This will decrease ISO ratings, in turn lowering homeowners insurance for the citizens of Berkeley County. The hope is to establish a reserve fund to pay for large unexpected expenditures. The figure they are

looking to get from this millage increase is approximately \$700,000. Mr. Bolz thanked the Committee for their consideration.

Chairman Fish asked if the grants that were recently gained by the rural Fire Depts. had any effect on the operating expenses?

Mr. Bolz explained it was his understanding that the grant monies could only be used for what they were specifically written for.

Councilmember Mims asked where these proposed taxes were to be levied? Incorporated (cities) or unincorporated areas of Berkeley County?

Mr. Bolz stated it would be the unincorporated areas only.

Councilmember Steve Davis asked if vacant land was currently subject to Fire Fees?

Mr. Bolz said it was not.

Councilmember Pinckney stated he realized there were some concerns regarding the 3.5 mill increase. He asked Mr. Bolz if he thought the 3.5 mill would be sufficient to provide the needed protection to the rural areas?

Mr. Bolz stated it was as long as they could meet the \$700,000.

Mr. Rozier interjected that 3.5 mills, according the County Assessor, would fund \$434,634. It takes 5.609 mills to bring in \$696,500.

Mr. Bolz asked what those figures included?

Mr. Rozier stated it included all owner occupied homes, rental homes, all vacant land and all commercial business. It does not include industry.

Councilmember Steve Davis asked if there would be an exception for industry?

Mr. Rozier explained that there was a cap on industry. If they wanted to remove the cap it would be Council's decision. Today an industry like NuCor is capped at \$7000 a year for fire protection.

Councilmember Steve Davis said this has not changed with inflation?

Mr. Bolz stated that industry has never paid an increase.

Councilmember Spooner asked how many times have they been called to a fire at an industry?

Mr. Rozier stated there was one call to Alcoa, and they went to support Alcoa who has their own fire services.

Councilmember Pinckney stated there are a number of homeowners in the rural unincorporated areas that will never call the Fire Dept., yet they will receive the increase. Therefore, he thinks it will be equally just for industry to pay the fee too.

Councilmember Crosby explained the he knows the small fire depts. need help, and that there must be ways to do that. Where he lives he pays 13.5 mills for recreation. They did not go into another area of the County to ask for that fund. Mr. Crosby stated he was not for a tax increase. The boards do not answer to Council; there is no accountability. They decide what they are going to buy and how they are going use their money, but yet you are coming to County Council to ask for a millage increase. There must be a way to manage the depts. without taxing the citizens of the County; in the past we have not raised taxes to balance the budget.

Mr. Rozier referred again to industry. Eighty (80) to Eighty-five (85) percent of our industries are on a Fee-in-lieu. Mr. Wrenn went to all these industries and got them to pay a fire fee up to the cap. State law does not require them to pay any fire fee. If you get rid of all those industries, you will not make it up in the ones that you will tax. You will lose money. "I am trying to protect the Fire Departments. You will not add it to any industry on a fee-in-lieu because they don't pay millage."

Chairman Fish requested that the Departments submit their prior two (2) quarters of financial information to the Committee and then Council will review this again.

B. Consideration prior to First Reading of an Ordinance granting a renewal franchise for the construction, acquisition, operation, and maintenance of a cable television system within specific unincorporated areas of Berkeley County to Pine Tree Cablevision.

It was moved by Councilmember Crosby and seconded by Councilmember Spooner to send the Ordinance forward for First Reading. The motion was passed by majority voice vote of the Committee; with Councilmember Steve Davis voting "Nay".

C. Review prior to Second Reading of the following:

1. Bill No. 03-01, An Ordinance authorizing and providing for the issuance of Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds of Berkeley County, South Carolina; prescribing the form of bonds; limiting the payment of the bonds solely to the net revenues derived from the operation of the system and pledging the revenues to such payment; creating certain funds and providing for payments into such funds; and making other covenants and agreements in connection with the foregoing.

It was moved by Councilmember Spooner and seconded by Councilmember Charles Davis to send Bill No. 03-01 forward for Second Reading. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote of the Committee.

2. Bill No. 03-02, First Supplemental Ordinance providing for the issuance and sale of Berkeley County, South Carolina, Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds, series 2003, in the principal amount of not exceeding \$130,000,000; prescribing the form and details of such bonds; and other matters relating thereto.

It was moved by Councilmember Steve Davis and seconded by Councilmember Spooner to send Bill No. 03-02 forward for Second Reading.

Mr. Rozier stated this was maximum amount not to exceed. Once it is determined which projects will be funded then the bond amount will be determined.

Councilmember Crosby asked if there would still be a \$6 increase even at the reduced project level?

Mr. Rozier stated that water would be increased by \$6 and sewer would be increased by \$6.95 if all the projects were funded.

The motion was passed by majority voice vote of the Committee; with Councilmember Crosby voting "Nay".

It was moved by Councilmember Spooner and seconded by Councilmember Steve Davis to adjourn the Committee on Finance. The motion was passed by a unanimous voice vote of the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

March 17, 2003
Date Approved

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
(Standing Committee of Berkeley County Council)

Chairman: Mr. Dennis Fish, District No. 5

Members: Mr. Milton Farley, District No. 1
Mrs. Judith K. Spooner, District No. 2
Mr. William E. Crosby, District No. 3
Mr. Charles E. Davis, District No. 4
Mrs. Judy C. Mims, District No. 6
Mr. Caldwell Pinckney, Jr., District No. 7
Mr. Steve C. Davis, District No. 8
Mr. James H. Rozier, Jr., Supervisor, ex officio

A Meeting of the COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, Standing Committee of Berkeley County Council, will be held on Monday February 17, 2003, in the Assembly Room, Berkeley County Office Building, 223 North Live Oak Drive, Moncks Corner, South Carolina, following the Meeting of the Committee on Public Works and Purchasing, the Committee on Land Use, the Committee on Water and Sanitation, the Committee on Human Services, the Committee on Community Services and the Committee on Justice and Public Safety at 6:00 pm.

AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 13, 2003

A. Mr. Fred Bolz, Berkeley County Special Fire Tax District Advisory Commission Acting Chairman, Re: Volunteer Fire Department Presentation.

B. Consideration prior to First Reading of an Ordinance granting a renewal franchise for the construction, acquisition, operation, and maintenance of a cable television system within specific unincorporated areas of Berkeley County to Pine Tree Cablevision.

C. Review prior to Second Reading of the following:

1. Bill No. 03-01, An Ordinance authorizing and providing for the issuance of Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds of Berkeley County, South Carolina; prescribing the form of bonds; limiting the payment of the bonds solely to the net revenues derived from the operation of the system and pledging the revenues to such payment; creating certain funds and providing for payments into such funds; and making other covenants and agreements in connection with the foregoing.

2. Bill No. 03-02, First Supplemental Ordinance providing for the issuance and sale of Berkeley County, South Carolina, Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds, series 2003, in the principal amount of not exceeding \$130,000,000; prescribing the form and details of such bonds; and other matters relating thereto.

D. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES:

Justice and Public Safety

Mrs. Judy C. Mims, Chairman

1. Magistrate's Department: Additional funds

February 12, 2003
S/Barbara B. Austin
Clerk of County Council